Article

"Frankly, My Dear, I Don't Want a Dam" in the US or in Iran: Environmental Movements and Shared Strategies in Differing Political Economies

Elham Hoominfar [1,*] and Claudia Radel [2]

1   Program in Global Health Studies, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL 60208, USA
2   Department of Environment and Society, Utah State University, Logan, UT 84322-5215, USA
*   Correspondence: elham.hoominfar@northwestern.edu

Abstract: In this comparative study, we explore why environmental movements against two neoliberal water transfer projects emerged and how they work in different political economies—a hegemonic capitalist democracy (Colorado, US) and a centralized authoritarian capitalist system (Iran). We apply Polanyi's and Gramsci's political–economic theories, using interviews and document analysis to examine and compare movement framing and mobilization and resistance strategies and tactics through this lens. The existing social movement literature leads us to expect fundamental differences, but although we find some differences, particularly in tactics, we find that these environmental movements have unexpected similarities in terms of framing and resistance strategies. Additionally, in both cases, outcomes remain uncertain despite the ostensibly large differences in political opportunities. In Colorado, project developers and social protesters may reach a compromise agreement through the civil society channel of the courts. In Iran, with a centralized state suppressing opponents whereas the project threatens local people's livelihoods, the environmental movement has assumed a more radical face.

Keywords: environmental counter-movements (ECM); political economy; Polanyi; Gramsci; neoliberalism

1. Introduction

Dams are common development projects to produce energy, secure water resources for urban areas, and support the expansion of agriculture and industry. In recent years, dams have received growing attention as a renewable energy source and strategy for climate change mitigation (Mayor et al. 2017; Shaw 2011; Kosnik 2010). Water transfer dams are motivated by the redistribution of water from one location or region to another to support new or continuing urban, agricultural, or industrial development. However, dams have social and environmental costs, particularly for local communities, with environmental degradation and loss of local aquatic ecosystems, displacement of people from homes and lands, and increases in poverty, unemployment, and conflict (Hoominfar and Radel 2020; Huber et al. 2017; Baird and Barney 2017; Aiken and Leigh 2015; Oliver-Smith 2009; Hemadri et al. 1999). Environmental social movements emerge to resist many dams, including those for water transfer. These movements do so in the context of state–civil society relations conditioned by the larger political–economic system and not only by the political system.

Here, we compare two matched projects (almost identical in construction and operation) in two different countries and the resistance to them. One project is in a capitalist democracy[1]—Colorado's Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) in the United States (US). The other is in a capitalist centralized statist system[2]—the BeheshtAbad Tunnel Project (BATP) in the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province of western Iran. Both countries have responded to water challenges with neoliberal capitalist approaches to commodify and

marketize water. However, the US centers on capitalism that relies on civil society for its operation, whereas Iran constructs its capitalism by concentrating executive and legislative power within high levels of the state. We consider these two water transfer projects in their different neoliberal capitalist contexts and explore environmental movement responses to fight implementation.

Understanding social movement formation and strategy and tactic[3] development in the context of larger-scale systems is of continuing interdisciplinary interest. A comparative political–economic perspective on the social relations around dams and the resistance to them can help advance understanding by illuminating why and how social resistance manifests in different systems against development projects framed as conflicting with local community and environmental interests. This study compares oppositional environmental movement strategies and tactics in two different political–economic systems and advances an understanding of how local communities, the environment, and state power or governance interact within a larger political–economic framework. To forward this aim, we explore resistance in these two similar cases of water transfer projects situated in different political economies, both of which, however, are neoliberal capitalist in nature. Both dams are designed to transfer river water from one location to other distant locations employing a neoliberal approach of water marketization (Hoominfar 2020b), and both have faced opposition.

Through comparison, we seek to understand whether and how different systems of power for the state governance of economies shape social mobilization. Iran and the US have important differences in the type of capitalism they employ, reflecting their differential position in a global World System, with one located in the global south and the other in the global north, and in their political systems (one is centralized, and the other is hegemonic). We engage Polanyian and Gramscian concepts to address movement formation and compare movement strategies and tactics to reveal how differing political economies limit or enable resistance to dams. The comparative study of the two oppositional movements makes a unique contribution by assessing whether a country's specific political economy, in addition to other factors already more substantively researched (such as class and social position, as well as political opportunity structures), impacts movement evolution. We contribute additionally by enhancing the conversation between the literature on social movements and neoliberal environmentalism with an international and interdisciplinary approach to illuminate neoliberalism's global face and operation in nature in different country contexts. Our approach emphasizes both the state's role in neoliberalism and the ways in which local communities resist neoliberalism.

Below we detail our conceptual framework and review key relevant aspects of the environmental social movement literature. We provide background for the two water transfer cases and present our methods and findings. Our findings focus on anticipated project effect framing in forming and maintaining the movements and on the strategies and tactics used to mobilize and effect resistance. We conclude with a comparative discussion to draw out insights on similarities and differences and note our unexpected finding of many shared characteristics across the cases. These findings highlight how neoliberalism in nature transcends political economy and leads to many similar aspects of oppositional movements, despite considerable differences in the political–economic context.

1.1. Conceptual Framework: Emergence and Development of Environmental Movements

Polanyi (2001) developed the "double movement" theory (first published in 1944) to analyze why counter-movements emerge to protect society in response to continuous market expansion. Polanyi did not address neoliberalism, as it had not yet formed in his time. However, his ideas about the impacts of the market on all aspects of society and nature are helpful, as continued market expansion is a key characteristic of neoliberalism. He referred to the expansion of a market system into all spheres of society, including its interactions with nature, which he believed should not be commodified or traded because it is not produced for sale. He argued that commodifying nature destroys society, separates

"people from power over their own economic life" (p. 234), and causes dislocations that are both geographic and social. The dislocations drive society to react, creating counter-movements, which (in turn) restrict further market expansion. These "movements for social protection" (p. 138) seek social changes to create democratic social spaces and protect community members from the market. Protection is necessary because marketizing all aspects of life causes widespread poverty and vulnerability.

Social groups involved in counter-movements are motivated not only by their own economic interest but also by the social interests of different groups threatened by the market. Thus, all social groups, not just the working class, may participate in counter-movements, and a coalition may form between different social classes. In general, Polanyi argued that the commodification of nature and its negative impacts are the resources necessary for environmental social movement emergence. Polanyi also showed that the government plays a vital role in shaping markets. He argued that although the liberal market claims that the state should not interfere with it, governments do protect the market through laws, social programs, deregulation, and authority. We use Polanyi's theory to understand why social movements against water transfer projects emerged in the two cases. His theory leads us to expect general similarities in movement emergence but, due to the role of the state, not necessarily in opposition framing and strategies or tactics in the different political economies of the US and Iran. Indeed, Polanyi's theory can help us understand why environmental movements have formed against the marketization of nature, but it does not deal with the nature of the emerging social movements or their strategies and tactics. So, we turn to Gramsci's theory on social movements to complement Polanyi's theory.

Gramsci's (1971) theory of social movements addresses why movements use different strategies and how coercion and consent can affect how movements operate, or the tactics they adopt, in different contexts. Gramsci developed the key concept of hegemony to refer to economic and sociocultural forms through which civil society creates "consent" between the ruling and subordinate classes, wherein most people consent to accept the dominant groups' interests as the general interests of society. Intellectual or ideological leaders of dominant groups have an important role in consent construction such that subordinate groups accept hegemonic ideas as "common sense" social norms. These norms then create the false consciousness of the subordinate classes, which eventually fail to pursue their own interests. Perry Anderson (1981) explains that although hegemony in Gramsci's theory is exercised through norms and through the educational and legal institutions of civil society, hegemony also includes elements of physical coercion applied through police and prisons. In other words, the state controls tools for the exercise of legitimized power, including through violence and legal and civil services (Bocock 1987), for enforcement of the hegemonic status quo. As a result, hegemony refers to the exercise of power through mechanisms of both consent and coercion. Thus, although Gramsci described hegemony as very much exercised in the context of parliamentary democracy in the "western" states, he also extended the concept to authoritarian state contexts with greater weight on coercion (Bates 1975). Therefore, we expect the specific and varying state and social mechanisms of consent and coercion to shape strategies of environmental social movements, as these strategies must counteract the prevailing hegemony.

Gramsci (1971) argued that opposition movements build "counter hegemony" as a means to enact social change, and he asserted that counter hegemony, or a "war of position", creates cultural struggle in civil society. Continuing that struggle further can create a "war of maneuver or movement" that ultimately can physically overwhelm the state's coercive apparatus. In this sense, we can also think of the first face of a social movement as a "war of position", in which counter hegemony needs to transcend class interests and reframe broader societal interests. To do so, it must challenge the intellectual perspective of ruling groups and so-called commonsense understanding. As such, the social movement needs to deploy its own intellectuals to develop a counter-ideology that can attract support widely, challenge false consciousness, and diffuse into all social

spheres. These ideas therefore generate some expectation of similarities in framing and strategy across all counter-movements for this "war of position", at the same time that the specific mechanisms of consent and coercion generate expectations of potential differences. Gramsci also argued that the movement then must identify when to change from a "war of position" to a "war of maneuver" (Butko 2004), something that is, in many cases, difficult to implement in democracies. In a western democracy, where power is distributed between different sections of civil society, the "war of position" remains the main solution, and consent is often recreated through hegemonic cooptation. However, when power is centralized in the state (e.g., in an authoritarian state), the "war of maneuver" can be formed more easily by political opponents. Thus, differences in the nature of the state lead to expected differences in whether a social movement changes to a "war of maneuver" with different strategies and tactics.

Together, Polanyi and Gramsci's theories create an underlying conceptual framework that can be applied to understanding why environmental movements arose against this study's two dams and, perhaps more importantly, creating expectations for how these movements work in the US and Iran. Gramsci and Polanyi were both aware of market threats to communities; however, neither directly discussed neoliberalism. Nonetheless, as we demonstrate in the context of this study, their theories continue to be relevant to understanding contemporary social movements in the context of neoliberalism. This study further reveals the practical values of these two theorists' concepts for understanding environmental social movements that challenge neoliberal market expansion to water management in both the global south and north.

1.2. Neoliberalism and Environmental Counter-Movements

Neoliberalism is a doctrine of market exchange that reorganizes capitalism in specific ways through economic and political reforms to extend the market into all areas of social life. The ruling class and its representatives in government enacted these reforms mostly after 1970 to strengthen their class power when profit rates were threatened by Keynesian economics and social democracy (Harvey 2003, 2007; Peck 2010; Bakker 2015; Prudham 2015). Scholars of neoliberalism and the environment (e.g., McAfee and Shapiro 2010; Bakker 2007; Harvey 2007) believe that neoliberalist policies separate nature from society at large and foster the environment's marketization to maximize economic benefit, but that these benefits come at high environmental costs. Some scholars argue that neoliberal natural resource development projects intend to dispossess others of agricultural produce, local land, and public water (e.g., Arrighi et al. 2010; Benjaminsen and Bryceson 2012; Büscher et al. 2012; Hall 2013; Jaffee and Newman 2013). Levien's (2013) study in India shows that development projects such as dams are a way to grab land and water from local people. Cáceres (2015) shows how the neoliberal Argentinian state in the 1990s dispossessed people of groundwater resources and heavily exploited nature. These scholars claim neoliberalism furthers capital accumulation, redistribution of resources, and restoration of economic elites in various ways, through new political and economic projects and regulations (Bakker 2018; Peck 2010; Harvey 2007). Some scholars further show how technocrats dominate the marketization of water in particular, with technocratic solutions separating water scarcity issues from the complex fabric of political–economic processes and social relations (Linton 2010; Ahlers 2010; Swyngedouw et al. 2002). Socioeconomic elites promote neoliberal policies using the commonsense notion that commodification and marketization "fix" environmental problems, water restriction, and environmental injustice (Bakker 2018; Greiner 2016; Butler 2015; Büscher et al. 2014; Ahlers 2010; Bakker 2007; Swyngedouw et al. 2002). However, studies show that these policies result in unemployment, poverty, deprivation, environmental degradation, and loss of land and public resources (Butler 2015; Haley 2011; Silva 2009, 2012; Haley 2011; McAfee and Shapiro 2010; Crabtree 2005; Harvey 2007, 2003; Robbins 2012). Since neoliberalism in nature threatens livelihoods and increases poverty, many social groups resist it (Perreault and Valdivia 2010; Escobar 2004).

Are contemporary environmental movements around the world counter-movements as posited under Polanyi's double movement theory, with Gramscian strategies to counter the hegemony of market approaches to environmental management? Scholars have tended to distinguish between the global north and south, identifying environmental movements in the global north as part of new social movements focused more on identity politics, with a focus on values, cultural elements, narratives, and symbols to frame collective identities and mobilize potential adherents (Polletta and Jasper 2001; Rao and Dutta 2018; Georgallis and Lee 2020) and contrasted with environmental movements in the global south focused more on livelihoods. Reflecting this distinction, Van Der Heijden (1999) argues that today, many environmental movements in the global north are not radical grassroot movements resisting neoliberalism but are neoliberal reformist movements. In contrast, Jaffee and Newman (2013) document radical resistance to water's marketization in Nestle's projects in the US. Over the last decade, there have been additional US examples of movements that reject or challenge market discourse. In the Standing Rock protest against the Dakota Access Pipeline, designed to carry oil from western North Dakota to Illinois, Native Americans and others protested pipeline construction because of anticipated negative impacts on water resources. The violent confrontation between protesters and police, the solidifying of local communities against environmental injustices, and the inclusion of language on the US colonial approach to Native American lands gave a more radical face to this movement (Whyte 2017).

In global south countries, protest against nature's commodification and further commons enclosure is common, especially as projects promise severe dispossession, marginalization, and impoverishment (Spronk and Webber 2007; Silva 2012). Silva (2012) believes the impacts of nature's commodification led to the massive mobilization against market reforms in many Latin American countries over recent decades. Cáceres (2015) asserts that "dispossession and resistance are two sides of the same coin" (p. 137) because enclosure separates the rural poor from their means of production. Natural resource depletion and degradation, not just dispossession, also negatively impact current and future generations through their livelihood activities.

Although commodification's negative impacts exist in many cases, scholars have shown that social movements only develop when opponents have resources to mobilize others for change (Carmichael et al. 2012; Snow 2004; Benford and Snow 2000; Klandermans 2004; Zald 1996). As Taylor (2000) explains, environmental movements arise when there are groups that can identify environmental problems as social problems. She identifies how organizers use framing to convince others to act collectively. These frames are the main resources for forming and motivating collective actions (e.g., Giordano et al. 2017; Terriquez et al. 2018; Brulle and Benford 2012; Snow 2004; Benford and Snow 2000; McCright and Dunlap 2000; Taylor 2000). Indeed, social movements try to frame conditions of concern as a shared public problem (Benford and Hunt 2003; Benford and Snow 2000); this frame can create social support (Ferree 2003) or facilitate the use of specific strategies and tactics (Benford and Snow 2000). Frames, therefore, have close relationships with the operation of social movements. Thorkildsen (2018) argues that social movements against dams can succeed if different framing scales can be applied in specific situations. With a case study in Brazil, he shows how the "Movement of People Threatened by Dams" reframed its argument from a local to a national problem and absorbed enabling coalitions at the national level. The struggle against the dam became a struggle against Brazil's energy policy and development model. Moreover, frames are not separate from broader struggles and are multifaceted; as Atkins (2019) shows, proponents of the dam in Brazil tried to frame their arguments around the national and economic benefits of dams and paint opponents as regressive.

In the scholarship on environmental movements in the global north, there is an emphasis on how environmental movements mobilize environmental values to gather people who are worried about natural resources and care about the environment (Polletta and Jasper 2001). Environmental discourse uses the language of catastrophe, social injustice,

and loss of natural resources in order to create change (Taylor 2000). In comparison, research on social movements in the global south also emphasizes the use of a justice frame but de-emphasizes the role of shared values and instead focuses on questions of resource control. For example, Karriem (2009) uses a Gramscian political ecology perspective to analyze the Brazilian Landless Movement (MST) and its struggle for land and natural resources justice. Neoliberal agricultural policies dispossessed many farmers of their lands and brought previously public lands into private ownership. MST, as a counter-hegemonic movement, improved local awareness and organized a referendum against Brazil's participation in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Ninety percent voted against it because MST shaped perception of FTAA as a "denationalization of agriculture".

Various scholars have used the concept of a "structure of political opportunities" to understand the fate of, and the differences or similarities among, movements in the global south and north. This concept refers to the degree to which opponent groups are likely to gain access to power and the decision-making system and how that affects the choice of strategies for social movements and their ultimate outcomes. In "western countries", non-violent resources are available for the emergence of protest, and opponents have access to the public realms and political decision-making and are supported by institutional rules (McAdam et al. 1996; Kitschelt 1986). As a result, some of these societies effectively assimilate movements that do emerge. However, as Kitschelt (1986) argues, focusing on the structure of political opportunities is not a sufficiently comprehensive approach for understanding case differences across political–economic boundaries.

Thus, the diverse literature on environmental social movements demonstrates a recognition of social movement variation but emphasizes framing differences between movements in the global north and south, and also differing structures of political opportunity. These distinctions rest largely on persisting, largely unarticulated assumptions around differences in the economic development stage as opposed to the political economy or on more narrow political system differences. This contrasts with scholars' understanding of neoliberalism in nature as penetrating (albeit unevenly) into both global north and south spaces and across political systems. This comparative study aims to shed light on some key questions. We ask: How do opponents frame dam consequences to build the environmental movement, and does this differ with political–economic context? What similarities and/or differences in resistance and mobilization strategies and tactics exist? Does the application of a political–economic lens change our comparative understanding of environmental social movements?

2. Cases and Methods

This study uses comparative qualitative research to analyze a complex set of socioeconomic, political, and environmental issues through an integrated focus on similarities and differences across cases. Our approach is most akin to the structured, focused comparison method (George and Bennett 2005), in which a structured inquiry is applied across cases with that inquiry focused on aspects defined by the specifics of the research questions. For the study, we selected two proposed water transfer projects in the US and Iran—The Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP) in Colorado and the BeheshtAbad Tunnel Project (BATP) in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province of western Iran—and asked a common set of questions across the two cases. Case selection focused on Iran and the US for the contrast in political economy, but also due to the background and connections of the first author to each of the two countries. Each specific project was selected after extensively reviewing different water projects in both countries to identify a well-matched pair. The selected projects are both water transfer dams formulated to meet the new demand for water from industrial and urban development. Both are governmental initiatives still in the early phases of implementation and also include reservoirs for storing and transferring water to different areas in Colorado and Iran. Both projects have met with resistance. The selection of these two cases presents an opportunity to compare, for matched water transfer projects, the emergence of resistance and the development of specific strategies and tactics in a case

from the global south and one from the north, with highly contrasting political–economic contexts.

The Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (Northern Water) operates NISP. If completed, NISP would transfer water mainly from the Poudre River and the South Platte River, yielding 40,000 acre-feet (49,339,200 cubic meters) annually for the future water needs of fifteen communities in Colorado's northern front range. In addition, NISP would buy agricultural water for municipal uses from several irrigation companies (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2018). The US Army Corps of Engineers initiated required environmental impact studies in 2004 and published the final reports in 2018. Environmentalist groups such as "Save the Poudre"[4] (STP) oppose NISP, stating that the project threatens water quality and quantity for the Poudre River and its ecosystem (STP 2018). BATP is more ambitious than NISP and, if completed, would transfer 470,214 acre-feet (580 million cubic meters) of water from the BeheshtAbad River, one of Karun River's[5] upstream branches in the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province, to Iran's central plateau (Isfahan, Yazd, and Kerman provinces). The transferred water would be used for human consumption and industry (IWPCO 2016). The Ministry of Energy is responsible for the project, and the Zayandab Consulting Engineer Co. has carried out required studies. The BATP has generated local resistance, especially in the Khuzestan and the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces, because of anticipated environmental degradation and water access loss. One of the most active grassroots campaign groups against BATP is "Zagros e Mehrabaan" (the Kind Zagros[6]).

The first author conducted 47 interviews (21 in the US, 26 in Iran) with key informants involved either in each project's development or resistance. For the US case, we identified initial key informants by searching the websites of NISP, STP, and the Colorado Institutional Water Center. For the Iranian case, we searched online and other sources discussing BATP, including environmental Telegram pages, magazines, and channels[7] (such as "Seday paye Ab (SPA, or the Sound of Water's Footsteps),[8] Karun and Karkheh,[9] Faryad Karun,[10] and Jolgeh Jonoobi (South Plan)[11]), the Khuzestan Province Environmental NGOs Network website,[12] and the Ministry of Energy website. We selected additional participants through purposeful snowball sampling, with the initial informants introducing us others (Baker et al. 1992; Creswell 2013). We included both opponents and proponents of the projects, but BATP's technocrats, authorities, and proponents refused to be interviewed.

For NISP, the first author interviewed environmentalists who are both activists and specialists in nature and water ($n = 12$, seven of whom were university professors), technocrats and managers who work for NISP and are NISP proponents ($n = 5$), university professors who have conducted research on the Poudre River but are not necessary activists ($n = 2$), and local farmers ($n = 2$). BATP participants included environmentalists and activists from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, Khuzestan, Isfahan, and Tehran provinces ($n = 12$), stakeholders such as local farmers ($n = 5$), water experts and environmental assessors ($n = 5$), university professors ($n = 2$), and local managers who work with water and agriculture ($n = 2$). The first author conducted 13 face-to-face interviews in Fort Collins, Colorado and seven other interviews through Skype or phone for the US case and conducted all interviews over Skype, WhatsApp, and Imo for the Iranian case. Each interview lasted between $1\frac{1}{2}$ and $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours and occurred in April through October 2018. Interviews covered each project's negative and positive impacts and who would benefit or lose from the projects (to uncover discursive framings). We additionally asked project opponents why they resisted, what their activities were, and how they attempted to stop or change the projects (to uncover movement strategies).

We also analyzed documents on the projects' histories, their expected environmental and socioeconomic impacts, and mobilization and resistance strategies and tactics for the counter-movements. For the US case, we sourced these documents from both the NISP and STP websites and included the 2018 Final Environmental Impacts Statement (FEIS), the 2017 Fish and Wildlife Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (FWMEP), other reports and studies from the NISP and STP websites, and the City of Fort Collins's (2018) report on

the FEIS. In the Iranian case, documents included the environmental assessment summary reports for the BeheshtAbad Dam, other BATP documents, discussions, news, reports and protest letters, and petitions to the authorities available publicly through Telegram.

We recorded and transcribed interviews, and the first author coded and categorized interview transcripts and documents numerous times, according to the study's research questions (Creswell 2013; Richards and Hemphill 2018), to understand movement emergence and strategies/tactics. For the NISP case, we used NVivo, but because BATP case interviews and documents are in Persian, we could not use NVivo and coded without specialized software. The coding uncovered dominant subthemes within the two overall research-defined themes. The practice of "open coding", an approach that refers to reading text several times, line-by-line, to identify and formulate all ideas, themes or issues, was vital (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011). This process permitted clearer organization of material and uncovered empirically-based concepts (Maxwell 2013; Creswell 2013), resulting in coding categories (e.g., "movements' strategies/tactics") with associated codes (e.g., "street protests", "enhancing public awareness", "using judicial system").

3. Findings

We categorize our findings below into two research-defined themes. The first covers the environmental framing, with our findings on how the counter-movements emerged and how organizers framed the water projects' negative impacts in order to mobilize resistance against the projects. The second covers the movements' strategies and tactics, with our findings on how the two movements have used both similar and different resistance strategies and tactics to try to stop the projects.

3.1. Framing: Socioeconomic and Environmental Dislocations

3.1.1. Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP)

Proponents define NISP as a development project, with economic benefits for society (Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District n.d.). The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (2018) FEIS states that NISP does not have any serious negative impacts, and proponents refer to the FWMEP (Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District 2017) to argue that any negative environmental impacts will be mitigated. Opponents, on the other hand, argue that the project diverts water essential to local ecosystems and relies on a false concept of excess water. They claim that water trade for profit is the main motivation, pointing out that the project will sell Poudre River water with a new market value and also buy water from irrigation companies to sell at a higher price. Most opponents argue benefits will go primarily to land and water developers and government agencies. One interviewee said, "This is a large water trade for specific groups... it is for banks, chambers of commerce, home businesses, roadbuilders, land and water developers".

NISP opponents include different social groups such as academics, environmental specialists and activists, and general citizens. "Save the Poudre" (STP) is the local group most vocal in their protest to protect the Poudre River, with the slogan "Frankly, my dear, I don't want a dam!". In 2004, two ecologists convened people to discuss the project, and in 2008 they formed STP. Although not all resistance is through it, STP plays an important role. Members created a website, and, as one member reported, they view NISP through an "environmental lens, not through a development and business lens", implying an environmental value orientation to STP's framing. From opponents' perspectives, NISP threatens both the quantity and quality of water in the Poudre River, and mitigation plans are not adequate. A university scientist stated, "The Army Corps and the statements of NISP are flawed; they're scientifically indefensible. Now, it may be too strong of a word to call them lies but between you and me, they are liars". The STP website states that 60% of the Poudre's flow is already diverted and that NISP would divert about 35% more (STP n.d.). NISP opponents argue that peak flows are vital for river ecosystems and that removing water would impact the diversity of organisms. An interviewee explained, "The kind of house where organisms live—the template—is very much structured by these high spring

flows. So, if you take that away or you reduce it, that house gets smaller... Organisms cannot live there". Others discussed how NISP would change water temperatures, creating a serious ecosystem threat.

Opponents, however, do not just focus on the environment for its own sake; they argue that the project will result in socioeconomic problems as well. For example, whereas proponents portray NISP as a development with important economic benefits and new jobs for the region (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2018), opponents think it will shift resources to businesses outside the Poudre basin and away from local people. STP's website says, "NISP would reduce the length of the recreational boating/floating season through Fort Collins and Windsor, as well as degrade water quality for body contact sports during that season... [it would lead to] water and wastewater treatment costs, water contamination issues, increased flooding risk ... Most of NISP's water would benefit people outside the Poudre basin" (STP, Top Six Reasons to Oppose NISP, available online: https://www.savethepoudre.org/our-campaigns/stop-nisp/the-top-six-reasons-to-oppose-nispglade-reservoir/, accessed on: 20 October 2020). Opponents also identify threats to northern Colorado's agricultural economy. NISP's main goal is water provision to support the demands of new housing developments (Harvey Economics 2017; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 2018) rather than agriculture. As a water manager stated, "The water is not going for agriculture... the fifteen small towns and water districts who are paying for the project intend to use 100% of the water for new urban development and have no responsibility to provide water for agriculture". An STP study ("The Farm Facts about NISP"; STP 2011) argues that NISP will negatively impact one-sixth of irrigated agricultural lands. One opponent said, "[NISP] is a displacement of agriculture with houses... They [proponents] spread their propaganda, and the message they have chosen is 'this project will help farmers'—that is a big lie".

3.1.2. BeheshtAbad Tunnel Project (BATP)

Proponents of the BATP present it as development to answer the water needs of central Iran (e.g., the IWPCO 2016). However, opponents argue that BATP is a business to sell water to industries in central Iran. Like NISP, opponents believe the project will commodify river water under the false notion of excess water, bringing ecosystem water into the economic market. In addition, they argue that BATP seeks to deprive villagers of their historical water rights. BATP's opponents include environmental activists and experts, academics, farmers, and citizens, particularly from the Khuzestan and the Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces. One of the most active groups, "Zagros e Mehraban", has a Telegram page and the journal "Seday paye Ab" (SPA) with about 4000 subscribers. This and other Telegram groups include environmental activists who organize and share data and other information about water projects with the public. Organizers use Telegram to reframe what government media present and to counter "policies and projects... that are in contrast to nature's and society's interest", as the administrator of one Telegram page stated. In Iran, opponents cannot form an official organization, such as a non-governmental organization, because such organizations need state permits, which are commonly denied. An environmental campaign leader told us, referring to protest movements, "Campaigns are more independent than NGOs or other organizations [in Iran] because they do not need permission from the state".

Opponents consider the Khuzestan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari provinces as the biggest project losers, since studies show that BATP would increase drought in these provinces (Halabian and Shabankari 2010; Khaastar Broujeni and Afzali Broujeni 2012; Yazdani Paraee 2016). An activist related, "The outlook of this project is ominous for the environment... This is a threat to water resources... This is the main factor for drought". Opponents emphasized that BATP would destroy the Karun River, the country's biggest water artery, by reducing water flow. Several opponents repeated that "BATP means the death of the Great Karun!" Reducing the Karun's flow will make it salty, detrimentally impacting the aquatic ecosystem. Also, most opponents believe the project threatens

millions of palm trees in Khuzestan. Many people whose livelihoods depend upon these palms, and the fruits they bear, would become impoverished.

BATP also poses serious threats to farmers who would lose water rights and lands. One opponent shared, "BATP is transferring water that is a resource for social and economic activities in these areas. Farmers are losing the agricultural water rights". Another resident stated, "Because of this project, we cannot cultivate... our water was sold". The agricultural ministry specialist's study (Nourbaksh 2012) shows that if BATP is built, "217 Qanats[13] will be destroyed, which means 12,336 hectares of agricultural lands would dry up" (p. 11). One Khuzestan university professor stated, "We have 200,000 farmers in Khuzestan whose livelihoods depend on water for agriculture. When projects such as BATP transfer the water, their economy will be destroyed, and they will be stuck in poverty".

One farmer mentioned that authorities claim that some farmers' lands are national property, but the farmers have notarized documents that prove ownership. Another opponent explained, "The Natural Resources Organization says these lands are arid, so [according to law] they should be under governmental control, but actually, some lands are arid because the government transfers their water to other places". Another, confirming this issue, said, "There is a close relationship between owning water and land. The government is not only taking water from the local community but is also taking land as well". BATP's opponents, like NISP's, believe the project's environmental assessment and data are fake or are not scientifically sound. As an Iranian professor argued, "BATP is their business... they are liars; their studies are not to protect nature; it is to justify their business". As evidenced by the interviews, the resistance's framing of BATP relies on livelihood and dispossession arguments but does also include some non-livelihood arguments related to the aquatic ecosystem as well, which could be interpreted as environmental value-based.

In both water transfer cases, social dislocations resulting from nature being marketed lead, as Polanyi argues, to the emergence of environmental counter-movements. And in both cases, we see opponents framing concerns similarly with respect to impacts on both the physical environment and livelihoods, although the relative weight of these framings is different. The next findings section explores the similar and different strategies and tactics of the two movements.

3.2. Resistance: The Counter-Movements' Strategies and Associated Tactics

3.2.1. The Northern Integrated Supply Project (NISP)

Enhancing Public Awareness

Data analysis revealed several core organizing strategies employed by NISP opponents. The first of these is to raise public awareness on NISP's negative impacts, by constructing and disseminating a counter-narrative based on the opposition framing discussed above. Organizers ask ecologists and water experts to present scientific evidence on the STP website and at public meetings. For example, the STP website cites US Geological Survey data on the peak flows necessary to maintain the river's health. The website also uses data to demonstrate how NISP will negatively affect water quality, water temperature, nutrients, and the lives of different species. STP is actively disseminating information in other ways beyond their website. At project public meetings, STP has worked to have a highlighted role, and STP's Facebook page, Twitter, and email network communicate information on NISP. One professor presented this information as neutral: "They [STP] provide awareness of the problem by writing letters to the newspapers or showing up to public meetings and speaking about it. They just increase the knowledge of people, so, they [people] can make up their own decision and be better informed". One interviewed NISP specialist believes that STP has been very successful, relating, "NISP has provided several thousand pages for environmental statements and mitigations. Most people cannot understand these technical discussions, but STP has summarized good statistics and discussions to show [the public] NISP's environmental impacts".

Bringing Public Pressure to Bear on Key Decision-Makers

Organizers use letter-writing campaigns as a tactic for bringing public pressure to bear on key decision-makers. Indeed, as a follow-on to enhancing public awareness, NISP's opponents then encourage people to send protest letters to authorities in the different organizations connected to NISP. As an STP member told us, "We're talking to the community people [to] write letters. We have them writing to our city council members that we have to vote against it [NISP]". The STP website has a part under "Take Action" and asks people to "Send Action Alert Email" to different organizations, asking the authorities to stop NISP.

Providing an Alternative

Another core strategy employed by NISP opponents is to offer an alternative—water management and conservation under a democratic decision-making process. One interviewed STP member said, "Our alternative includes more conservation, more water reuse, and other things that would not involve taking more water out of the river". STP's website has a section labeled "Alternatives to NISP" (STP n.d.) that explains how society can meet new demand for water "through straightforward and proven conservation techniques, improved demand management, and water use efficiency by municipal and industrial users, and with very modest improvements in agricultural water use efficiency". On their site, they try to show people that the solution to water problems should be sustainable, with emphasis on the interests of the environment. In addition to emphasizing management and conservation policies on STP's website, opponents seek participatory democracy for water management that they believe would elevate nature and society above narrow economic interests. They believe people should participate directly in the decision-making process. As one of them informed us, "They [the Water Conservancy District] have an appointed board. So, we don't elect their board, and no one can control them. They're off doing whatever they want to do, which is very undemocratic... people have no influence over them".

Relying on the Judicial System

A third strategy the data reveal is to use the judicial system. Opponents believe NISP is illegal under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because of its negative environmental impacts. Some opponents hope the courts will stop the project, and one argued that by using the judicial system, "We are taking advantage of our powerful environmental laws". One STP member stated, "We're going to use these [NEPA] laws ... they've done things wrong with the process and the science is bad". However, others believe the project has strong governmental support and significant monetary resources; they hope to use the courts to reduce its negative impacts. As one informant expressed, "NISP is sort of like [a] big giant elephant in the room that has all the strength and power, and I'm trying to minimize how much damage that elephant is going to do... [The] court maybe helps us to minimize this". Thus, most NISP opponents have reasonable faith in the courts, arguing, "So, it's going to be an intense battle, but hopefully the legal system will save the river". If they do not win in the courts, project opposition does not seem to have additional strategies they are prepared to pursue.

3.2.2. The BeheshtAbad Tunnel Project (BATP)
Enhancing Public Awareness

The data demonstrate that BATP's opponents first tried to discuss the project's negative impacts with the government, but after being ignored, they involved the public directly. One opponent told us, "In 2003, we tried to convince the Ministry of Energy ... that BATP is a threat to the environment and the people. They did not care. Then in 2011, we tried to get public attention seriously". Through sharing information and environmental arguments with the public, opponents raise awareness about BATP's negative impacts and discursively counter the state's narrative. Opponents contend that BATP is intended for industrial use rather than drinking needs, contrary to Iranian water transfer law (IWPCO 2014).[14] One

opponent stated, "Everyone knows they [BATP authorities] are liars. BATP is not for people; this is for their own business and factories". Unlike in the NISP case, project opponents and local people do not attend BATP meetings, nor do they have access to BATP-related plans and information. As one university scientist stated, "They do not let us attend the meetings because they are scared that it will bring social problems and protests". These constraints make the construction of a counter-narrative more difficult, but opponents use Telegram to share information and news about the actions of project authorities with the public. For example, SPA published a confidential letter dated 5 November 2017 from the head of the Department of Environment in which he agreed to transfer water from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari and Khuzestan to other places despite the environmental issues. This sparked widespread protests. On 20 September 2017, Faryad Karun's Telegram page said BATP would negatively impact 21,150 people in fourteen villages and 85,353 people in seven cities. Opponents use available means to disseminate their concerns regarding the project and mobilize the community. One told us, "We shared academic reasons to stop this project with public. We show how BATP is destroying nature and would cause misery for people... People would lose their agricultural water, the health issues would be serious, and drought would be for our area... We want society to be sensitive about this project".

Whereas BATP opponents use a variety of tactics to increase public awareness, including newspapers, websites, and other social media, Telegram pages and Instagram are particularly important tools because they provide some degree of anonymity and therefore protection and, to date, the government has not been able to block these outlets. As an interviewee reported, "If there were not these Telegram pages and channels, people would not know the truth about BATP. ... [Telegram groups] have improved the knowledge of local people and Iranian people in general about the water transfer project". Another said, "They [Telegram groups] are helping Iranian society to know more about the environment and to be sensitive about these projects". A Telegram page administrator related, "We are using Telegram as a tool to share our opinion, environmental concerns and our reasons to stop these projects with people. Many people can be members of these pages and daily receive news and our arguments... The phone numbers can be unknown... It helps us to have almost a safe atmosphere". The Telegram pages continuously update information for social protests on environmental issues including BATP. One opponent noted, "We do not talk only about the negative impact of the project... We talk about economic benefits that a specific group will get and the corruption in our economic political system, and the role of the Ministry of Energy, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, parliament and political groups in this project. We talk about private companies that are getting advantages from this project, and how Iranian society and its environment are not important to them. We talk about BATP's political economy". Our data suggest that sharing information to enhance public awareness is a particularly important strategy in the Iranian authoritarian context, where information is tightly controlled. The tactic of using platforms like Telegram have facilitated the success of this strategy.

Bringing Public Pressure to Bear on Key Decision-Makers

For this strategy, opponents use two different tactics. First, they also engage in letter-writing campaigns, writing protest petitions directly to Iran's authorities, detailing BATP's negative impacts and asking them to stop the project. Several professors at Shahr-e Kord University wrote a letter to the General Inspector of Iran to protest the project, stating the many problems that BATP would have for nature and society. The letter authors called BATP "anti-national".[15] In another letter,[16] dated 13 December 2015, two hundred members of the city and village councils in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province wrote to the Iranian Supreme Leader and asked him to stop various water transfer projects including BATP. These letters are different from those encouraged by STP organizers against NISP. The wording and tone of the BATP-protest letters are often more radical. For example, in a letter dated 9 March 2018 from the Zagros e Mehraban campaign, addressed to the Iranian Supreme Leader, letter-writers stated, "Because of the catastrophic impacts of these projects

on the Iranian environment... and an anti-justice development discourse that these projects have... there is no alternative other than a revolution".[17] A Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Parliament member wrote an earlier letter (in 2016) to the Iranian president stating, "BATP is like colonialist policies for Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari province". Opponents also wrote the United Nations and asked the South Korean Embassy to stop cooperating with this project (a Korean company is helping with BATP construction). Second, project opponents engage in street protests. The data reveal a major difference between the resistance tactics in the NISP and BATP cases. BATP opponents have organized street protests in Khuzestan, in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari, and in front of the Parliament building in Tehran. On 24 September 2017, the SPA Telegram page warned the government to "stop the water supply projects by the end of the month. Otherwise, thousands of people will join protest rallies". As an interviewee noted, "People formed many human chains around the Karun River to show their protest against water projects, including BATP. There were six human chains; the longest one was about 10,000 people in 2013... People want to show their opposition". In these human chains, people protested BATP and other water projects, holding signs with slogans such as "Do not take Karun from Khuzestan", "Karun's life is our life", and "BATP is the Death of Karun" (MehrNews 2013; DW 26 October 2013; SPA 12 June 2016; 24 February 2017). In some protests, the police have shot people. On 19 July 2016, a local person was killed, and many were injured or arrested (DW 2016; Khabaronline 2016). Most protesters were citizens from Khuzestan and from Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari. One opponent told us, "They [protestors] are ordinary people; they experienced the environmental problems in their personal life. They know better than everybody what water transfer projects and dams are".

Providing an Alternative

The data reveal that organizers in the BATP case also adopt the strategy of providing an alternative for meeting real water needs. As one opponent reported, "BATP has formed based on fake needs; we do not have this project for water needs. It is for business, so we first explained this to people. Then, we argue for [real] water problems and correct water management, not just building dams". BATP's opponents, like NISP's, present water management and conservation as alternatives. Opponents emphasize benefits of modified and nature-adapted water management/operation and development in accordance with the ecological potentials of different regions and in line with environmental protection (Khakpour 2012; Samadi Brojeni 2012). Moreover, Telegram pages such as SPA, Karun and Karkeh, Faryad Karun, and Jolgeh Jonoobi provide details on these alternatives, including for sustainable development based on ecological capacity and social justice. For example, Frayad Karun, on 21 April 2018, criticized Iran's development process, suggesting a more sustainable approach such as transferring industries from desert areas to other regions with better water resources. The "Zagros e Mehrabaan" campaign proffered its own alternative called "Water Parliament" to democratize decision-making processes for water allocation in Iran. Authors of the online SPA Telegram page have discussed this alternative throughout the last two years more than 48 times. Although this concept remains somewhat unclear, the Water Parliament proposal includes provisions for transparency and the free flow of information about water issues and plans, justice-centered management of water, retreat from neoliberal water policies and water commodification, and democratization of water resource decision-making processes to involve relevant stakeholders directly.

Using the Judicial System

Our data indicate that BATP opponents also attempt to use the judicial system as a movement strategy. According to Iranian Constitution Article 50, "environmental protection" is a public duty and any economic activity that causes environmental degradation is forbidden. One opponent reported, "The project is illegal according to Approvals 10 and 13 of the Water Supreme Council,[18] which says that water transfer can only occur for drinking water". One activist told us that Article 66 of the Code of Criminal Procedures

declares activities causing environmental degradation to be criminal. She emphasized, "We are using these laws to protect the environment and stop BATP". However, most opponents agreed that the judicial system has been unresponsive. One opponent said, "The judicial system benefits from these projects too; it is a part of the corruption. This system is suppressing us; our problem is that we do not have a democratic system". According to another, "Hope in the judiciary to stop the BATP is in vain". BATP's opponents have far less faith in the judiciary than do organizers in the NISP case. Nonetheless, as one stated, "The judicial system might not help us, but we use all capacities in society to stop the project... We will not allow them to sell our water in peace". In this sense, BATP opponents are not relying on the judicial system.

In summary, organizers in both movements have employed a variety of resistance strategies and tactics. One core strategy has been to communicate information to improve public awareness, a strategy at root designed to create a counter-narrative and combat false consciousness. Another linked strategy is bringing public pressure to bear on key decision-makers through conducting letter-writing or petition campaigns, and in the Iranian case, also through street protests. Two other core strategies have been to provide an alternative to the project, which can be seen as part of the counter-narrative, and to attempt to use the judicial system to challenge it. Although the two cases share clear similarities in strategies, the relative success of strategies and of the specific tactics employed have differed. In particular, the movement in the Iranian case is more radical in discourse and tactics, with street protests and other means to operate outside of state control.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Polanyi argued that commodification of nature causes serious negative impacts on the environment and society and drives society to react. From this perspective, both environmental movements are responses to environmental and socioeconomic problems anticipated by the dams. Both social movements have framed the projects as business opportunities for select groups with significant costs for nature and communities, including the environmental threats to the quality and quantity of water.

An important difference between the cases is that BATP's dispossessions of local people's water and land, combined with drought, is expected to cost people their livelihoods, whereas the anticipated socioeconomic impacts of NISP appear relatively milder. As Dwivedi (2001) asserts, livelihood threat is one of the main reasons environmental movements in the global south often form with the wide support of local people. Indeed, as Polanyi mentions, dislocations caused by these projects, including environmental degradation and social problems for the whole society, can bring different social groups together to protect society and nature beyond a single class movement. In the NISP case, these different social groups include academics, local businesses, and general citizens in Colorado who are mostly concerned about the environment and negative consequences on the quality of life in the impacted area. In the BATP case, in addition to these different social groups who are concerned about environmental interests, there are more vulnerable groups that would lose their means of production and would face poverty because of the project. In particular, these include many farmers who historically have not been very active in vital Iranian social movements, revolutions, and protests (Abrahamian 2014; Shakeri 2005; Seyf 1994; Keddie and Richard 1981). Thus, the opposition movement to BATP has emerged in relation to class conflict as well as shared environmental values.

In both cases, proponents, including the state, framed projects as development and focused on economic benefits. This is the "commonsense" language that neoliberalism uses for many projects and plans for the environment and for natural resource management. Opponents have reframed projects as serving narrow economic or business interests of specific groups. Both oppositions also have built narratives around the official studies as being insufficient, not based on good scientific data, or even based on false data. Indeed, opponents emphasize the need to counter what they frame as the project authorities' false narratives and misleading presentation of the projects as being in the general development

interests of all communities. Our analysis shows that project authorities in both cases discursively form an invisible power structure around the projects using the ideas of development. Since the proponents of the two projects try to show that opponents are antidevelopment, in forming alternatives both counter-movements construct a vision of sustainability for water management, in which environmental interests and social justice are essential. As Gramsci's theory would suggest, both movements, therefore, mobilize counter-hegemonic discourse with competing narratives of project benefit and cost and project alternatives. Nevertheless, in formulating its claims, the Iranian environmental movement highlights particular issues, including poverty and the loss of people's means of livelihood. This framing can be an essential reason for adopting a different tactic (such as street protests under severe repression) for this movement compared to the NISP.

Opponents engage in similar strategies to advance these counter discourses and stop the projects. First, they engage in activities to increase public awareness, using various mechanisms (for example, virtual tools or public meetings). They use social media (such as Telegram), their own websites, and mass media to communicate data and other information. Second, they engage in or mobilize others in letter-writing campaigns to pressure authorities. Third, they present alternatives, such as correct water-demand management and water conservation. As a result of these strategies, the two movements have achieved certain outcomes. In both cases, the projects have been postponed for more than sixteen years. The City of Fort Collins (2018) has now formally opposed NISP (Regular Meeting, 2 October 2018), and in the BATP case, some members of Parliament have joined project opposition.

Both movements have tried to use the judicial system to enforce existing environmental laws and therefore bring about a final resolution in their favor. For NISP, some opponents hope that the US legal system will help them stop or modify the project to reduce damages. For most NISP opponents, failure in court will end the movement. Gramsci argues that the legal system is a part of established institutions of civil society, used to reach consent in a democratic capitalist society. There is no indication that the movement against NISP would ever go beyond legal civil society mechanisms. The US context of a hegemonic state with an active civil society leads to a greater acceptance of state-sanctioned means for opposition and protest. The project's not yet posing a significant threat to people's livelihoods also plays a role in greater reluctance to engage in extralegal movement strategies. Nonetheless, the NISP case does stand against Van Der Heijden's (1999) claim that most environmental movements in the global north are neoliberal reformist efforts at best, as the movement's counter-narratives reject neoliberalism and water's commodification.

In contrast, Iran's political economy means civil society is not strong. Although BATP opponents also have tried to use environmental laws to stop the project, the legal system in Iran plays an important role in enforcing the centralized state. For example, in 2016, local people in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari held a protest against water transfer, and the Iranian Court sentenced 78 of them to imprisonment and flogging (Persian BBC 2019). Moreover, many opponents do not organize in an atmosphere safe from state persecution. If the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and other state institutions receive benefits from projects like BATP, as some opponents believe, this brings the projects into an atmosphere of national security. These state institutions have enough political power to suppress and threaten any opposition, and some environmentalists involved in opposition to water projects, including BATP, have been charged with national security crimes. Nonetheless, movement resistance has persisted. In fact, due to the lack of public access to project information, absence of public meetings, direct repression of opponents as dissidents, and the project constituting a serious threat to people's livelihoods, the Iranian movement against BATP has developed a more radical face. The successful mobilization of thousands for street protests in western Iran reflects the lack of political space for less radical strategies to find success.

Differences in the structures of political opportunities can help explain differences in tactics and in the relative weight of strategies otherwise in common across the two cases.

Although the opponents of NISP are not present in the critical decision-making stages and many feel powerless in relation to establishing this project, compared to Iran, they have access to civil society conditions to bargain with the state. For example, they have better access to the judicial system and public meetings. However, the structure of political opportunities is only a partial explanation, as it isolates the political system from the larger political economy that defines class relations. The governance of the economy in relation to society is key in the comparison of these two cases, with a focus on the structural tools of consent and coercion in maintaining class relations.

In general, in both cases we can observe Gramsci's "war of position", or the cultural and ideological struggle against hegemonic water development discourse. In BATP, authorities applied the full range of the hegemony's tools to try to construct consent and then coerce acceptance, marshalling state violence against dissidents. The state and judiciary suppression have pushed the Iranian movement to become more radical. However, the key reason why protest and radical reaction persist, even under violent repression, is the severity of the livelihood issues and anticipated environmental destruction compared to the NISP case. This severity stems from the larger political–economic conditions. The SPA Telegram page promises that "Khuzestan is on the path to a great environmental upheaval". During the last few years, Iran has had many street protests, with Khuzestan and Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari having the highest rates (Saidi 2018; Asadzade 2018). The movement in Iran has already mobilized thousands of people for street protests, and Gramsci's "war of maneuver" may be imminent. On 1 March 2019, after the arrest of an active member, the Zagros e Mehraban campaign sharply threatened the society's ruling groups, stating their demands would become more than just stopping the water transfer project; the campaign would become "a civil movement to provide people in Zagros the civil rights that were violated—rights such as infrastructure for health,... the right to employment and work, the right to represent the political voice of people by political characters [a democratic election] at the center [of Iran, in the capital] ... , the right to standard higher education..". Organizers also stated that there is a "connection between the exploitation of the vital resources, the projects of water transfer, water dams, and the trap of deprivation in these areas". Activists with Iranian environmental movements also participate in and support other movements such as labor movements, student radical activities, and teacher associations and protests (Hoominfar 2020a).

This study shows that these environmental movements, despite significant differences in political economies (as well as, more narrowly, in political systems and therefore in the structure of political opportunities), are surprisingly similar. Although differences exist with the framing of identity versus livelihood-based interests and resistance shaped by the severe repression of the Iranian political system, the social movement similarities across the two cases indicate the common function of the neoliberal market in commodifying nature for the benefit of some at the expense of others. Ultimately, our analysis of these two cases demonstrates the effectiveness of the Gramscian and Polanyian conceptual frameworks for understanding local resistance strategies in the face of neoliberalism's global reach into nature, even in differing contexts. Based both on aspects of Gramsci's theories and on the social movement literature's distinction between the global north and south, we expected to discover more differences than similarities, but we found the opposite to be true.

Notes

[1] We use "capitalist democracy" to refer to the political economic system in which a democratic state establishes the conditions for free-market capitalism, with additional policies for resource allocation through social entitlement (Musacchio et al. 2015).

[2] We use "capitalist centralized statist system" to refer to a political economic form in which a centralized state (where power is concentrated centrally at higher levels within the state) engages in a type of state capitalism (with the state exerting a high degree of ownership and/or control within the economy) (Batchelder and Freudenberger 1983).

[3] According to social movement literature (Doherty and Hayes 2019; Smithey 2009), strategies are the combination of claim, aim, and a specific site, whereas tactics refers to specific steps and means which are applied to reach those aims; for example,, strikes or occupations are the tactics used to put pressure on power as a strategy in social movements.

[4] http://www.savethepoudre.org/ (accessed on 10 October 2022).

[5] The Karun is the biggest river in Iran.

[6] The name refers to the Zagros Mountains, which are a long mountain range in Iran, northern Iraq, and southeastern Turkey.

[7] Telegram is a cloud-based instant messaging and voice-over-IP service. It works just like popular messaging apps WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger. Telegram provides opportunities for people to have a page, magazine, or channel, all of which are tools for broadcasting messages to large audiences because there is no limit to subscriber numbers.

[8] https://t.me/sedayepayeab1 (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[9] https://t.me/joinchat/BJp9FD-q3gPT9wbdw3A49A (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[10] https://t.me/faryadekaroon (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[11] https://t.me/jolgeh_jonoobi (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[12] This network seeks to coordinate all environmental organizations in Khuzestan and raise awareness of environmental activism. http://enngo.ir/post/tag/%D8%B4%D8%A8%DA%A9%D9%87+%D9%85%D8%AD%DB%8C%D8%B7%D8%B2%D8%8C%D8%B3%D8%AA+%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%B2%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86 (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[13] A qanat is a gently sloping underground channel to transport water from an aquifer or water well to the surface for irrigation and drinking.

[14] Environmentalists mention the approved 13th and 10th meetings of the Water Supreme Council, but only the 13th was available for the public to review at the time of this research. The Iranian Ministry of Energy has since removed this information from their website.

[15] https://t.me/sedayepayeab1/3864 (accessed on 1 April 2018).

[16] http://zistboom.ir/fa/news/30451/%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%87%DB%8C-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%AF%D9%85-%DA%86%D9%87%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%AD%D8%A7%D9%84-%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%AE%D8%AA%DB%8C%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D9%85%D8%AE%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%81%D8%AA-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D9%BE%D8%B1%D9%88%DA%98%D9%87-%D9%87%D8%A7%DB%8C-%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A2%D8%A8-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%B1%D9%87%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%82%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%A8 (accessed on 1 April 2019).

[17] https://t.me/sedayepayeab1/11160 (accessed on 10 October 2022).

[18] This council was organized in 2002 and is located in the Ministry of Energy. According to Article 138 of the Constitution in Iran, the decisions of this council must be implemented.

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